SHADOW STRIKES

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THE Shadow STRIKES!™

DISILLUSIONS-- and Illusions

PART ONE

JONES • WHIGHAM • BEATTY • HOLLINGSWORTH

NETZER

"WHAT CAN I SAY ABOUT THE MAN? I ONLY BEGAN TO UNDERSTAND HIM ON THAT LAST MORNING, WHEN WE TOOK TEA IN THE SULTANAHMET..."

YOU MUST LEARN TO USE A SAMOVAR, CRANSTON. YOU--

BAM BAM BAM

WHAT'S THIS ABOUT?

HATS.

HATS?!

BAM BAM BAM

THE FEZ HAS BEEN OUTLAWED BY THE REVOLUTION, AND *MOSLEM* TRADITIONALISTS ARE BEING SHOT FOR WEARING THEM.

HATS.

CAN YOU NAME SOMETHING BETTER OVER WHICH MEN SHOULD KILL EACH OTHER...THAN *HATS*?

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"I COULD NOT. AND SO I WATCHED KENT ALLARD SIT BEFORE ME, ALTOGETHER IMPASSIVE, AS THE SOLDIERS REMOVED THE POOR WRETCH'S DEAD FORM."

VAT, YOU ARE NEFFER GOINK HOME, INZPECTOR CARDONA?

HOME?!

I FINALLY GET SOME REAL DOPE ON *LAMONT CRANSTON*--AND YOU THINK I'M GOING *HOME*?

MONTHS I'VE BEEN SNIFFING ALONG THAT MONKEY-SUITED JACKAL'S TRIAL...

...AND FINALLY I GET SOME ***SPOOR***. AN UNNAMED PARTY WITH A "VESTED INTEREST" IN CRANSTON SHIPS ME SOME OF THE BOYO'S OWN DIARIES!

AH. "FESTED INTEREST." JA.

NOW *MAYBE* I FIND OUT WHY HE'S ALWAYS SKATING AROUND THE EDGES OF CRIME SCENES.

OR AT *LEAST* I FIND OUT WHAT TURNED THAT *LOUNGE LIZARD* INTO "*MR. MYSTERY OF MANHATTAN.*"

FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENED IN '29.

GOOT READINK DEN, INZPECTOR.

DET. J.CARDONA

"HE WAS AN AVIATOR, THIS ALLARD..."

GOOD READING, INDEED.

"...A WORLD WAR AIR-ACE WHOSE LIFE SINCE THE ARMISTICE WAS THE STUFF OF MYSTERY, OF LEGENDS.

"ONE THING ONLY WAS UNIVERSALLY ACKNOWLEDGED: HE HAD WANDERED THE WHOLE OF ASIA, AND LEARNED MORE OF THE HUMAN RACE THAN ANY NORMAL MAN WOULD WANT TO KNOW...

"...BEFORE WASHING UP HERE IN THIS EDDY OF THE WORLD, THIS BEACH LITTERED WITH THE FLOTSAM OF THREE CONTINENTS.

"THIS ISTANBUL."

DISILLUSION

BASED ON CHARACTERS CREATED BY WALTER GIBSON

"HIS WORLD-WEARINESS AND HIS GRIM TALES MADE HIM A FAVORITE AT THE WATERING HOLES OF THE WEALTHY AND FOREIGN...

"...MOST PARTICULARLY THAT PRIVILEGED GROUP THAT DID ITS DRINKING AT THE PERA PALAS HOTEL.

"THERE WERE FIVE THE NIGHT I MET THEM. *LOUIS DUMARS*, A FRENCH DIPLOMAT ASSIGNED TO WIN TRADE CONCESSIONS FROM THE YOUNG TURKISH REPUBLIC...

"...*HORATIO GREY*, COMMANDER OF HIS MAJESTY'S SHIP *TENACIOUS*, SITTING UNEASY IN THE BOSPORUS BY RIGHT OF BRITISH MIGHT...

"...A LOCAL EXPORTER, AN ESCAPEE FROM THE UNPLEASANTNESS IN RUSSIA, NAMED *BORIS KUROGIN*...

"...AND A PAIR OF LOCALS. *MEHMET ALI-PASHA*, COUSIN TO THE RECENTLY DEPOSED SULTAN OF THE OTTOMANS...

"...AND *SULEIMAN YOGUL*, A PHILOSOPHY PROFESSOR AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ISTANBUL, THE ONLY ONE WHOSE TRADE WAS WISDOM, AND NOT POWER OR WEALTH.

"A LESSER MAN THAN ALLARD WOULD HAVE FELT HONORED BY THEIR ATTENTIONS. THEY ADMITTED FEW STRANGERS TO THEIR LITTLE CLUB."

DO COME IN!

COME IN!

"THEY OPENED THEIR DOORS ONLY WITH GOOD INCENTIVE."

COMMANDER GREY, THIS IS *LAMONT CRANSTON*, THE NEW YORK *FINANCIER* OF WHOM I SPOKE!

AH, YES! JUST OFF THE ORIENT EXPRESS, I HEAR! LOOKING FOR A BIT OF *ADVENTURE*, ARE YOU?

I ASKED WHERE A FELLOW MIGHT FIND SOME *FUN*--

AND OF *COURSE* YOU WERE TOLD TO COME TO US! HA HA! YOU WILL NOT BE IN ERROR, MY YANKEE FRIEND!

I MUST TELL YOU, MR. CRANSTON, HOW I LOVE YOUR NATION! OH, THE AMERICAN FINANCIER IS THE ARISTOCRAT OF THE MODERN WORLD, TRULY!

WELL, HERE'S *ONE* WHO DOESN'T SEEM HAPPY TO SEE US.

THEY DON'T SEEM MUCH INTERESTED IN SEEING *YOU*.

THEY WILL BE. I'M *DAISY*.

FRESH AS ONE, AT LEAST.

I'M KENT.

AH, IT NEVER FAILS! THE LADIES FIND ALLARD!

WHAT IS IT, ALLARD? WHAT IS THE SECRET?

THE AIR OF *INDIFFERENCE!* IT NEVER FAILS!

WHEN A MAN HAS NO MONEY, HE HAS TO FIND OTHER THINGS THAT WORK FOR HIM.

THE NAME IS ALLARD, KENT ALLARD.

MM. YES. WELL...

...PLEASED TO MEET YOU, ALLARD.

MONTY, MAYBE HE'S THE ONE! HE *LOOKS* THE PART!

"THE ONE"?

I'LL LEVEL WITH YOU, ALLARD. WE'VE COME TO ISTANBUL LOOKING FOR...*EXOTICA*, SHALL WE SAY?

OR SHALL WE SAY...

...LOOKING FOR *SIN*?

OH, ALLARD IS YOUR MAN, THEN! THEY SAY HE KNOWS EVERY BACK ALLEY IN ASIA! HE KNOWS LIFE'S UNDERBELLY BETTER THAN I KNOW FLOWER EXPORTS!

OOOO!

OH, YES. NO ONE BETTER THAN ME...

...TO PARADE TURKEY'S MISERIES FOR THE AMUSEMENT OF THE *RICH*.

GOOD HEAVENS, ALLARD!

WHAT HAS GOT INTO YOU?

BEATS ME, BOYS. SOMEONE MUST HAVE TAKEN POSSESSION OF MY SOUL FOR A MOMENT.

I'LL BET YOU NEVER KNEW I WAS A VICTORIAN **REFORMER** IN MY LAST INCARNATION!

HA HA! THAT'S THE OLD ALLARD!

THEN YOU'LL GUIDE US?

INTO THE **DEPTHS**, DEAR GIRL. INTO THE **DEPTHS**.

<ALI-PASHA... WE MUST TALK.>

SO WHEN DO WE SEE IT, ALLARD? WHEN DO WE SEE THE EVIL OF THE CITY?

THE EVIL.

I'M AFRAID THE GREATEST EVILS AREN'T VERY ENTERTAINING. BUT THIS MAY BE WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR.

:BRRRRRR:

OOOO. WHAT ARE THEY SMOKING? DOES SHE TAKE OFF HER VEILS?

SIT AND WATCH, MISS DAISY.

JUST BEWARE OF WANDERING HANDS.

ALLARD! THROW DOWN YOUR KNIFE!

JUST AS I THOUGHT. THE *RASPUTNIKS*.

DO YOU REALIZE WHAT YOU DID? YOU MIGHT HAVE COST THIS GIRL HER LIFE!

IF YOU WANT TO TASTE FORBIDDEN FRUITS, MR. CRANSTON, YOU HAVE TO RISK POISONING. THESE WEEDS BEAR BITTER FRUIT AT TIMES.

PERHAPS YOU'D DO BETTER TO TAKE A NICE FERRY RIDE ACROSS THE BOSPORUS.

I'M NOT AFRAID, ALLARD, IF THAT'S WHAT YOU'RE IMPLYING. WHATEVER YOU CAN SHOW ME--I WANT TO SEE.

DO YOU, NOW?

THEN HOW WOULD YOU LIKE SOME REAL TURKISH *INTRIGUE?* HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO HELP ME **DEFEAT** THESE ENEMIES OF MINE?

WHY, I...I...

...OF COURSE, ALLARD. OF COURSE I'LL HELP YOU.

AND WHAT DO YOU WANT, DAISY?

CASH, MR. CRANSTON? OH, WE CAN PROVIDE ALL THE CASH YOU WILL EVER NEED! AFTER A SLIGHT CASH INVESTMENT, OF COURSE.

YOU SEE, WE WISH TO EXPORT TO AMERICA CERTAIN PRODUCTS. BUT WE DO NOT WANT TO WORRY ABOUT CUSTOMS. YOU UNDERSTAND, I AM SURE?

GO ON.

WE HAVE PEOPLE PREPARED TO EXPORT THESE PRODUCTS, AND OTHERS IN AMERICA PREPARED TO DISTRIBUTE THEM. BUT WE NEED SOME HELP IN BANKROLLING TRANSPORTATION.

YOU'LL TRANSPORT BY SHIP?

NO, NO, NO, BY AIRPLANE! WITH YOUR NEW FRIEND ALLARD AT THE CONTROLS... WE HOPE!

YOU SEE, ALLARD IS A GREAT FLYER. LEGEND SAYS HE IS THE GREATEST OF ALL. BUT HE IS A MYSTERIOUS ONE.

IT IS SAID THAT HE DISAPPEARED IN THE WAR, THOUGHT DEAD WHEN HIS AIRPLANE WENT DOWN OVER GERMANY.

YET SUDDENLY, OUT OF NOWHERE, HE APPEARS AGAIN--IN THE HEART OF ASIA! SAYING NOTHING OF HIS PAST!

WE DO NOT KNOW IF WE CAN TRUST THIS STRANGE MAN.

IS THERE ANY WAY YOU CAN LEARN MORE ABOUT HIM FOR US, MR. CRANSTON?

AND WHAT DO YOU WANT TO KNOW, MR. ALLARD?

I WANT TO KNOW WHY YOU PLAY THIS ROLE. YOU CLAP YOUR HANDS AND GASP LIKE A CHILD...

...BUT YOUR EYES ARE DEEP. YOUR EYES ARE ANGRY.

WELL! YOU HAVE A NERVE, MR. ALLARD!

YES, I DO. NERVE IS ONE THING LIFE HAS LEFT ME.

WHAT ABOUT YOUR NERVE, "MISS DAISY"? WHY DO YOU CONCEAL IT?

YOU KNOW WHY.

MEN.

THEY SAY THEY WANT A WILD GIRL THESE DAYS, BUT ONLY WILD AT PARTIES. ONLY WILD ON A TABLE TOP OR IN THE BACK SEAT OF A ROADSTER.

BUT THEY STILL WANT US TO GASP OVER THEIR WAR STORIES AND CLING TO THEM IN DANGER.

AND WITHOUT MEN--MEN LIKE LAMONT--WHERE WOULD I BE? HOW WOULD I GET AWAY FROM THE DEADNESS OF AMERICA?

HOW WOULD I GET ANY EXCITEMENT?

EXCITEMENT. EVERYONE SPEAKS OF EXCITEMENT THESE DAYS.

BEWARE OF THE HUNGER FOR EXCITEMENT, DAISY. YOU MAY ACTUALLY FIND IT.

OH, NOW YOU CAN'T JUST DROP A LINE LIKE THAT WITHOUT FOLLOWING UP, MR. ALLARD! WHAT EXCITEMENT HAVE YOU SEEN?

THAT'S THE TROUBLE WITH US AMERICANS. TOO MANY DIRECT QUESTIONS. WE NEED TOO MUCH HARD INFORMATION.

YOU CAN SEE WHY I LIKE THE TURKS. THEY ARE THE GREATEST TALKERS IN THE WORLD. THE TURKS KNOW HOW TO MAKE A GREAT EVENT OF LUNCH, OF BARGAINING, OF ARGUING POLITICS.

NOTHING MAY BE SAID... BUT LIFE IS LIVED.

YOU'RE JUST DODGING MY QUESTION!

I HAVE NO INTEREST IN YOUR QUESTION. I HAVE NO INTEREST IN MY PAST.

AND YOUR FUTURE?

THERE IS NO FUTURE.

BUT AREN'T YOU EVER AFRAID OF WHAT'S COMING? DON'T YOU EVER THINK ABOUT... YOUR OWN DEATH?

ONLY TO WISH FOR IT OCCASIONALLY.

YOU TOO?

I THINK ABOUT DEATH ALL THE TIME. HOW... SIMPLE IT WOULD BE. BUT I'M TOO AFRAID TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT.

I'M NOT AFRAID. OFTEN I THINK I'D LIKE TO SURRENDER TO THAT LONG SLEEP. BUT I CAN'T.

THEY TRAINED ME TOO WELL.

"TRAINED" YOU? WHO... WHAT...?

WHY SO MANY QUESTIONS ABOUT MY PAST, DAISY? ARE YOU ASKING FOR YOURSELF... OR FOR SOMEONE ELSE?

WHAT?! HOW CAN YOU ASK SUCH A THING?! I... I...

...I BELIEVE I'M GOING BACK TO THE HOTEL!

I SEE. AND YOU WILL FIND YOUR WAY OUT OF THE GRAND BAZAAR ALONE?

OF COURSE I...

...I...

...YOU COULD BE A GENTLEMAN AND WALK ME BACK, YOU KNOW!

TURKISH FOOD IS THE BEST IN THE WORLD, AND I HAVE NO INTENTION OF MISSING A SINGLE MEAL FOR THE SAKE OF YOUR HONOR.

NOW SIT DOWN-- AND WE'LL TALK ABOUT WHAT'S REALLY GOING ON HERE.

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED?

HOW DID YOU GET IN HERE?

DID THEY BRING THEIR PROPOSITION TO YOU? DO YOU KNOW WHAT THEY'RE PLOTTING?

OH, THEY BROUGHT IT UP. THEY REVEALED NOTHING THIS TIME, BUT THEY WILL. I HAVE THEM IN MY PALM.

I TOLD THEM I HAD A "CASH PROBLEM," JUST AS YOU WANTED. AND THEY *BELIEVED* IT.

THEY SHOULD. SINCE YOU *DO* HAVE A "CASH PROBLEM." OR SOON *WILL*.

WHAT?! DON'T BE ABSURD! I HAVE--

YOU HAVE A LARGE PIECE OF A SOUFFLÉ ABOUT TO FALL. YOU HAVE A PENT-HOUSE IN A BUILDING ABOUT TO COLLAPSE.

THE WALLS OF CREDIT ARE SHAKING, CRANSTON. AND THE WIND OF POVERTY IS BLOWING HARD. 1929 WILL NOT BE KIND TO YOU.

HOW DO YOU KNOW THIS? JUST WHAT THE HELL *ARE* YOU?

ONLY A MAN WITH BETTER EYES AND EARS THAN MOST.

AND WHAT *ELSE* DO THESE "BETTER EYES AND EARS" TELL YOU?

NOTHING OF INTEREST TO YOU, CRANSTON. BUT I THINK YOU CAN HELP ME TO SEE AND HEAR *MORE*.

HOW WOULD YOU FEEL IF I TOOK YOUR PLACE?

WHAT...WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

I'VE LEARNED A FEW ARTS OVER THE YEARS. ARTS OF CONCEALMENT. ARTS OF CHANGE.

ARTS OF DISGUISE.

YOU... YOU...

NO, MR. CRANSTON.

YOU.

MONTY!

WELL?

WELL WHAT? YOU DIDN'T *REALLY* THINK I HAD ANYTHING TO TELL YOU, DID YOU? I'M JUST *NERVOUS*. AND LONELY.

I HAVE SOMETHING TO TELL YOU ABOUT KENT ALLARD! COME IN HERE!

AND I'VE *MISSED* YOU.

DO YOU REALLY HAVE TO GO?

I TOLD YOU. I HAVE AN IMPORTANT MEETING WITH MY NEW BUSINESS ASSOCIATES. *KUROGIN* EXPECTS ME AT HIS *MANSION* IN HALF AN HOUR.

WELL, I'LL BE WAITING.

AND THANK YOU FOR...*THIS*. YOU WERE WONDERFUL.

MUCH *MORE* SENSITIVE THAN *LAMONT*.

WHEN DID YOU *REALIZE*?

NOW, REALLY. YOU DON'T THINK I'D TELL *YOU*, DO YOU?

KRAKA

ROOM

DONNG

SNK

TMP
TMP

FWOOMP

KUROGIN?

KRAKOOOM

A WISE MAN RETREATS AT THE SIGHT OF DEATH!

DOES HE, NOW? WELL...

...FORGIVE ME MY FOLLY!

HAHAHAHA

BA-BA-BA-BA-BA-BA-BAM!

NEXT: THE BIRTH OF THE Shadow

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Well, as you might have known, this letter column mostly revolves around the announcement of this book's upcoming end with issue #31. Hey, at least we got lots of letters. And now, to you.

Dear Brian,

Re: SHADOW STRIKES! #26

Let me just cut to the chase. The book is getting cancelled?! SAY IT AIN'T SO! I should've known this would happen, just as things are getting up to top shelf, if you get the drift. Problem is, today's readership—at least the majority of it, anyway—has hardly heard of the Shadow, except of the infamously laughable updated version of a few years back. The preference of these readers is the Ramboesque violence that has been chic since the mid-'80s. The Shadow represents the criminal's worst nightmare, more so than even the Batman. With this series set in the Shadow's "golden age," some folks might be turned off because it isn't present times as they know them.

That the Shadow will return in some form in '92 softens the blow. I, for one, would like to see a series of miniseries, keeping the present format intact, if an unlimited series is a no-go. Also, I again propose an "Elseworlds" team-up with the Batman, which is a natural. It's been fun, guys and gals.

See you... soon.

Jacob Gilbert
Troy, NY

* * * * *

Dear Friends,

I say friends because only friends know how to hurt and also how to forgive. I opened issue #26 as usual at the letters page and was horrified to find the end is due with issue #31. That hurts. Now forgiveness. I didn't write all those letters of praise I meant to, it was more than deserved. I love this book and I never did get around to buying all the copies from all the outlets just to increase the circulation. I should have, forgive me.

To all, thank you. I hope we see this quality of comic again with respect to the Shadow, perhaps a quarterly. I can but dream. The weed of crime does indeed bear bitter fruit and this news is a lemon. Take care.

Simon Bell
County Armagh
Northern Ireland

* * * * *

To The Masters of Men,

It is with a heavy hand and heart that I compose this letter. It seems as though those dark clouds that have hovered on the horizon for so long have finally broken; the saga that has been told in THE SHADOW STRIKES! will soon be drawing to a close. I will miss it dearly.

I will take this as my last chance to express my appreciation of the book and of all the work you have done on it. I was hypnotized by the original "Death's Head" storyline, a tight and poignant story by Gerard Jones hauntingly depicted by Mr. Barreto's deliciously dark art. I regretted losing Barreto, but Rod Whigham has certainly proved up to the job.

I loved the two-parter featuring Shrevnitz and the strike storyline. Not only was the art wonderfully refreshing and appropriate, but the storyline illustrated two of the great strengths of this book: the development of the supporting characters and the thoughtful treatment of period issues. This is a period story, as the Shadow is by all rights a period character, and is at his best when portrayed as such. Period.

And the recent return of Shiwan Khan could not have been more deliciously handled! By saving the greatest of all confrontations for so long you have made it all the more satisfying; I hadn't realized until now how strongly I've been hungering for exactly this tale! The Orient, white tigers, old masters, Harry Vincent's heart-wrenching loyalties! Secrets of immortality! The fire opal's Mother?!! Even the cover of #26 is near perfection; it seems right that the man who did the cover for the very first issue should come back so near the end, and I would not complain if he finished off the last few.

It just makes it all the more sad to see the book go; it has consistently been one of my favorites. Unfortunately, a high-quality product has never had assurance of success in our peculiar commercial system.

It would seem at first that the book lacked an audience. After all, the Shadow's costume is just not garish enough for the average comics buyer, nor would it seem that said buyer is very likely to be interested in the Great Depression, Prohibition, or the early attempts at unionization. But the last few years have seen the introduction of a new, more thoughtful reader, one who frequents such books as SANDMAN, SHADE, HELLBLAZER and SWAMP THING (as well as various publications by DC's smaller competitors, who are quicker to adjust to the market). This new reader likes to savor his mystery in the careful darkness, likes to be challenged to think. Sadly, these folk don't frequent the same social circles that the Dark Avenger does. Most do not know that he exists.

I would venture that the Shadow has a substantial audience, but they just don't know it yet. And now, it appears, they never will.

David R. Karlotski
Concord, NH

* * * * *

Dear Shadow Folks,

Say it isn't so! DC cannot cancel the best comics version of The Shadow ever published. THE SHADOW STRIKES! is a great book. The current Shiwan Khan storyline is the best you've done so far. It would be criminal to let this title die just when it was becoming more and more interesting every issue. I am hoping that if enough people write, this title can be saved. If that doesn't work and if there is a "very good chance" that the Shadow will be back next year, I hope that the current concept, true to the pulps, will be back, with the same creative team.

This title really is the only comics version of The Shadow to do our hero justice. DC's 1970's version, even though it had some fantastic art by Mike Kaluta,

had very weak stories. The Chaykin/Helfer/Baker version was an absolute blasphemy. Gerard Jones has kept his stories true to Walter Gibson's original, while adding some modern touches that do not detract from the originals. Jones has given Margo Lane depth, and made her an interesting character. The pulps' Margo was nothing but a pain in the ass. Eduardo Barreto and Rod Whigham have always done a great job. Both of them seem to have a good grasp of the period the stories are set in and the characters they are telling stories about.

I feel guilty for not writing before. I only hope that THE SHADOW STRIKES! can be saved. I'm encouraging everyone that I know who reads the title to write. If THE SHADOW STRIKES! is doomed, then thanks to Gerard, Eduardo, Rod and everyone else who has made the book what it was. You did the best.

Todd Beard
Lawrenceville, GA

* * * * *

Dear Misters Jones and Augustyn,

I am angry that your title is being cancelled. The Shadow has never been more alive, more deep in characters or plots as much like freight-trains to the bizarre. As a fan of the man in black (Mr. Cash, too), I have put up with some lame interpretations of the man, but yours is delightful, with complex plots and diverse players.

I write this with one question in mind: Is there any way the mag can be saved, or have the wheels of destiny crushed the comic already, with nothing that can be done? Please answer me this.

If not, then you said he may return in some other form. Might I suggest a team book? Hear me out: What do you think of the Shadow teaming up regularly with a certain Man of Bronze and the Lord of the Jungle? Think about it, a P.J. Farmer family reunion that leads to adventures together. I'd be happy to write it, overjoyed to write it. If not a trio, then combine the bronze with the black.

If not, then put him in an anthology book. DC PRESENTS didn't work out well, but that was because weak garbage compensated for the awesome material put in as fillers. Making it monthly or bimonthly would help, too, but I don't expect you to believe me on that. (Dark Horse made theirs work, so can you.)

Finally, do not fault the creative team. The book was fabulous and will live beyond the flyspecks of directionless creativity that float about today. The Shadow has been around for over fifty years and is going nowhere. It has survived comics failing and half-wit authors writing tripe for too long to go down for good. Good titles always come back. RAGMAN. DOOM PATROL. THE QUESTION. SHADE, THE CHANGING MAN. If Shiwan Khan, Hitler's best, the Light, the Prince of Evil and Frank Nitti can't kill him, I doubt Jenette-wan Kahn can do in our hero. Until he's revived, he will be waiting in the darkness for us all, right where he's the most comfortable.

The Dark Librarian
Tampa, FL

Just to respond to one of your points: The Man of Bronze and the Lord of the Jungle are licensed characters, licenses DC does not have, and we will soon no longer have the license for the third member of that team either.

* * * * *

Just a final comment. We don't often get to hold a funeral while the patient is still alive, even if just barely. We've gone through all the steps when we heard of his upcoming demise. Anger. Denial. Grief. Now, I'm asking you to accept the finality of the situation and get ready for the end of this wonderful ride we have in store for you next month. We're trying to make it real special. Till then—

Bob Kahan

NEXT ISSUE:

THE LEGEND IS BORN!

We've Got a Crisis Here

This week's *Inside DC* focuses on a recent letter from Toledo, Ohio's Ian Ascher...

Dear Mr. Eury,

I am writing in response to your request at the end of your third column. My question is, why does DC ignore the CRISIS ON INFINITE EARTHS story? I realize its purpose was to clean up the DC continuity and have a beginning and ending, but everything in DC today comes back to the Crisis. Look at ARMAGEDDON 2001—it completely destroyed the pre-set future CRISIS made. Other examples are Booster Gold, the Linear Men, and the Time Masters. CRISIS even continues to pop up in WHO'S WHO; an example is Universo's entry.

Again, I ask, why does DC fail to recognize CRISIS ON INFINITE EARTHS, the comic industry's greatest title? I can think of a hundred reasons for a sequel. At least you should put out a WHO'S WHO CRISIS special retelling the histories of all the people and worlds included in the story.

Thank you for your time, and I await your answer.

Ian Ascher
Toledo, OH

Thanks for your letter, Ian. CRISIS ON INFINITE EARTHS—the groundbreaking 1985-6 series that streamlined DC's multiple worlds and continuities into one—is a frequent topic of conversation and criticism among our older readers, nearly six years after its publication.

First and foremost, no one at DC is actively ignoring the Crisis. It is indeed a part of DC continuity. Due to the alterations in our characters' timelines that resulted from the Crisis, however, our heroes, villains, and other players in this epic recall this earth-shattering event in a post-Crisis perspective, reflecting the changes that transpired therein: what they remember is that the Anti-Monitor attempted to destroy the Earth, the skies turned red and turbulent, and many heroes, including the Flash (Barry Allen), the first Dove, and Aquagirl, valiantly sacrificed their lives to save others. Everyone's memories of parallel Earths and multiple versions of characters were erased just as those worlds and characters were themselves.

CRISIS ON INFINITE EARTHS was a stunning work of art that provided us with a new canvas on which we've been painting since 1986. Yes, things have changed and have continued changing since CRISIS... and that's the point. Ian, you and thousands of DC readers are watching comics history in the making—we're establishing continuity every day with each comic book we publish. You're in on the ground floor, and in 1992 we're working much harder at creating a more consistent and cohesive DC universe.

Since the publication of CRISIS, some of our older readers have charged that we've eliminated the stories they so cherished during their childhoods. I certainly understand this sentiment, being a 34-year-old DC diehard who's read DC titles regularly since the sixties. But prior to CRISIS, newer readers were greatly confused by DC's often-conflicting multiple continuities and their respective multiple versions of our characters. We needed a clean slate from which to build a fresher, newer, more accessible universe and body of stories. CRISIS ON INFINITE EARTHS provided that.

And while many of those older stories we grew up with no longer "exist" in the current DC canon, they will *always* live on as long as we can reread and cherish back issues. But DC's shift to a newer continuity was never intended as a slam against our longtime fans. Our frequent reprint collected editions, especially the GREATEST STORIES EVER TOLD and DC ARCHIVES series, should quite clearly prove that we, as editors and publishers, still love those old DC gems, too. (And what a perfect place to plug a few reprint editions due this winter: JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA ARCHIVES premieres in February, followed by THE GREATEST BATMAN STORIES EVER TOLD VOL. 2, featuring the best of the Dark Knight's clashes with Catwoman and the Penguin, in April.)

And, Ian, there are many adult, lifelong DC fans who support our post-Crisis revised continuity, including Arlington, VA's Gerald S. Smith, a 30-year-old spacecraft engineer who writes, "I've always followed the adventures of the Justice League and other DC characters. They were my role models at a time when peer pressure and other factors bombarded me from all sides. I would like to commend DC for its work during the past few years since CRISIS. Even though I do not agree with some of the changes made, overall they've been positive. The story lines have improved, especially in the SUPERMAN and WONDER WOMAN series. JUSTICE LEAGUE is amusing, but sometimes I yearn for the old 'serious' JLA." Thanks for your support, Jerry. (And you'll be pleased with some of the upcoming changes in direction in the JUSTICE LEAGUE titles, including a JUSTICE LEAGUE *OF* AMERICA miniseries coming later this year.)

And finally, Ian, in regard to your request for a WHO'S WHO CRISIS edition, we already did that with the *original* WHO'S WHO that premiered concurrently with the first issue of CRISIS back in '85. Producing a new volume that chronicles continuity and events that are no longer canonical would only confuse new readers and undermine the hard work of hundreds of writers, artists, and editors who have helped shaped DC's current mythos.

DC's past is rich and glorious, but it is indeed that—the past. Please join us for DC *today*—chances are, twenty years from now you'll remember the latest issue of GREEN LANTERN or GREEN ARROW as warmly as you recall an issue of GREEN LANTERN/GREEN ARROW published twenty years ago.

See you next week.

—Michael Eury